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NJMC Takes Additional Steps to Understand Global Warming Impacts

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission today allocated \$20,000 to establish Sediment Elevation Tables (SETs) in Meadowlands District wetlands to monitor changes caused by rising sea levels.

“Wetlands are crucial to flood and erosion control, to providing habitat for wildlife to feed and nest, and to maintaining the equilibrium of human and natural presence in the Meadowlands region. We cannot afford to lose these valuable resources,” said NJMC Chairwoman and New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Susan Bass Levin. “By studying the effects global warming, we can continue solidifying policies to combat it.”

A minimum of five SETs will be installed by the United States Geological Survey to separate wetlands changes caused by sea level rise from changes caused by natural sinking and sediment accumulation. Data provided by the SETs will help create models to identify vulnerable wetlands locations and provide guidance for future management and enhancement activities. The USGS has installed similar monitoring systems in Jamaica Bay, Fire Island and Narragansett, Long Island in response to a recent trend of wetlands becoming tidal shorelines and mud flats.

SET data collected in the Meadowlands will be combined with data from other locations in an effort to share research on global warming throughout the New York City Metropolitan Area. The NJMC will gather scientists from the Princeton University, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Columbia University, and the New York City Department of Parks to discuss regional sea level rise and climate change at the Meadowlands Symposium May 5.

“The new research approved today supports the NJMC Master Plan that calls for the preservation of 8,400 acres of wetlands and open space and NJMC Comprehensive Action Plan that calls for the maximization of wetlands and habitat,” said NJMC Executive Director Robert Ceberio. “It also recognizes the necessity of confronting environmental challenges on both sides of the Hudson River.”

Last year, the NJMC committed to the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions seven percent below levels recorded in 1990 by the year 2012. The agency has supported the protocol by developing incentives to encourage environmentally-friendly green building, converting its vehicle fleet to fuel-efficient hybrids, encouraging land use policies that reduce sprawl and promote transit-oriented development, and supporting a unique car-sharing program to lessen the number of vehicles on the road.

Furthering these climate protection initiatives, the NJMC Board also voted today to enter into a contract with Gabel Associates to provide energy consultation, engineering and implementation services. The firm will assist in the preparation of procurement documents for the installation of solar facilities at municipalities, school districts and other entities participating in the Meadowlands Regional Renewable Energy District, review proposals for the NJMC solar project, conduct a detailed energy audit and provide design specifications to increase the energy efficiency of NJMC buildings.

The NJMC is currently developing an energy master plan for the Meadowlands District which will include a carbon footprint for different types of land uses, measures to increase energy efficiency, and a strategy to achieve 20 MW of solar, tidal and geothermal energies by the year 2020. The plan is expected to be complete by Summer 2007.

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